

*Housing a Complete Community:
Housing Chapter of the City's
Comprehensive Plan*

Introduction: Context and Vision

The Role and Importance of Housing

A home for all: housing is one of the most basic human needs. Housing provides shelter and security and serves many other roles. It nurtures human connections among family and neighbors; it offers opportunities for innovation and creativity in home maintenance; and for many it is a financial investment.

Housing is tied to many aspects of community life, including transportation, economic development, education, health care, and the environment. Attractive neighborhoods, historic districts, and a wide range of housing types draw people to a community and are closely tied to a robust local economy.

Regional Population and Housing Trends

Since 2010 the D.C. metro area's population has increased by nearly two percent annually to more than six million. Most of that growth is from international in-migration and natural increase. Over that time period the composition of households has changed. The region has experienced a relative increase in millennials and persons 55 years of age and older. Households are generally smaller, with one in four composed of persons living alone.¹

At the same time, the region is experiencing a shortage of housing. The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments reports that

¹ *Demographic Trends Report*, Falls Church, Virginia, Lisa Sturtevant & Associates, September 2018.

100,000 homes are needed by 2045 to meet the regional demand.² The region's population is growing faster than the housing supply.

Local Population and Housing Trends

The population of Falls Church has been growing at an annual rate of 2.6 percent over recent years. The percentages of millennials and persons 55 and older have been increasing relative to other segments of the population. One-third of City residents live alone.³

In parallel, the City has seen an increase in the number of multi-family homes. Since 2008 four new apartment complexes have been built: Lincoln at Tinner Hill, West Broad Residences, Northgate, and Pearson Square. These buildings account for most of the recent increase in rental homes. Three new condominium complexes have opened in the City since 2004: The Broadway, The Byron and Spectrum.

Meanwhile, the number of single-family attached and single-family detached homes, although still the largest segment of the housing stock, has decreased since 2010, as illustrated in the figure below.

² <https://www.mwcog.org/newsroom/2018/09/12/new-cog-analysis-recommends-increase-in-area-housing-production/>

³ *Demographic Trends Report*.

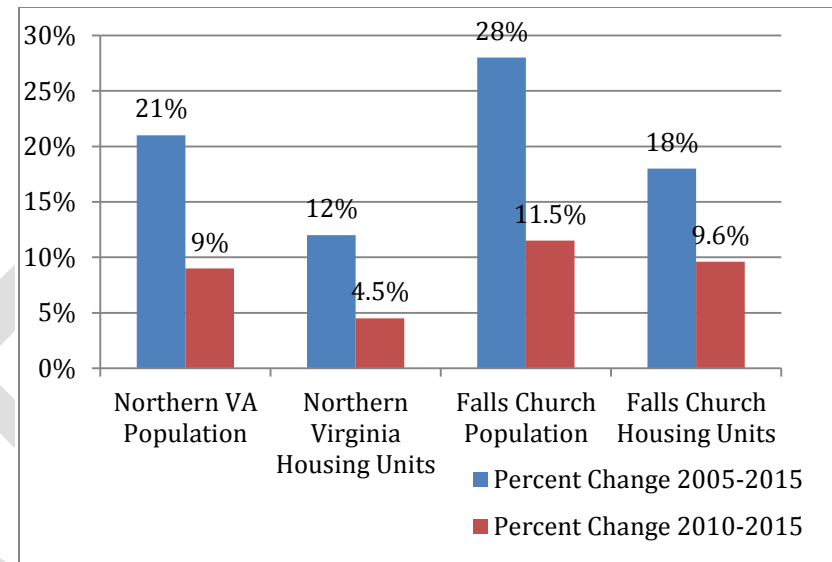
Unit Type	2010 Stock	2016 Stock	Percent Change
Single Family Detached	2,342	2,260	-3.5%
Single Family Attached	890	760	-17.1%
Multi Family Building	2,110	2,669	20.9%
Other	0	20	-
Total	5,342	5,709	6.9%

Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2016

CONFIRM TABLE WITH SCHOOLS

The City has also experienced a trend in tearing down single-family homes, renovation or expansion of existing housing, and addition of single-family homes. Since 2006, 180 homes have been torn down and 66 net single-family dwellings were added to the City's housing stock.⁴

As with the region, the City's population has been growing faster than its housing stock, as shown in the figure below.



Issues

A number of housing issues affect the City of Falls Church. These include high demand for all types of homes and the high cost of existing and planned housing stock; a lack of developable land for new housing; tear-downs and renovations to the existing housing stock; new large homes built on lots where smaller homes previously existed; and limited housing options for low- and moderate-income persons, senior citizens, and persons with special needs. All these issues are discussed in this chapter.

⁴ "Single-Family Construction History," Fact Sheet prepared by Community Planning & Economic Development Services, City of Falls Church.

Vision

Build and maintain a diverse housing stock to ensure that decent, safe, affordable housing is available to all residents. Accommodate all life-cycle stages and needs. Preserve and promote historic and stable neighborhoods, while expanding regional and local economies.

Goals

Based on the above vision, the following goals will guide City actions in the coming years.

1. Encourage creation of a range of residence types in order to meet the needs of our diverse community by providing housing for all household sizes, ages, and incomes.
2. Preserve historic neighborhoods and promote neighborhood stability.
3. Protect and support affordable living for persons with disabilities, the elderly and other special needs populations.
4. Ensure equitable housing opportunities for all without regard to race, color, religion, sex, handicap, family status, or national origin.

Chapter Organization

The remainder of this chapter describes existing conditions in City housing of all types, an evaluation of housing needs in the future, and a set of strategies, policies, and actions to meet the above vision and goals.

How to Use This Chapter

The Comprehensive Plan serves as the official policy guide for shaping the future of the City. It establishes priorities for housing efforts and projects. This chapter recognizes that implementation must remain flexible to changing conditions and that priorities will change. This chapter should be used as a framework for scheduling projects and documenting completed projects.

Specific location and design decisions are intended to be worked out on a project-by-project basis during implementation. Specific tasks in the Plan are scheduled in one of three timeframes: short term, medium term, and long term. Those terms refer to the following ranges:

Timeframe	Expected Completion
Short Term	2019-2021
Medium Term	2022-2024
Long Term	2025 or later

Existing Conditions

City Neighborhoods and Historic Preservation

Falls Church, first settled in 1699, boasts numerous historic residences and neighborhoods. Although the City has lost many historic properties over time, as of 2005 it had certified 92 historic residences built prior to 1911, some prior to the Civil War. (A few of these have since been decertified and at least one new residence has been certified.) Several City neighborhoods were established prior to World War II (e.g., Greenway Downs), but many have lost integrity over time as homes have been torn down and replaced with larger structures.

The era of greatest residential subdivision growth in Falls Church was 1948-1965. Notable among the City's 31 subdivisions with clear identity today are Broadmont, Falls Park, Village Ridge Hills, and Virginia Forest. The residential area along East Broad Street between Roosevelt Street and Washington Street maintains a high degree of historic integrity and neighborhood stability.

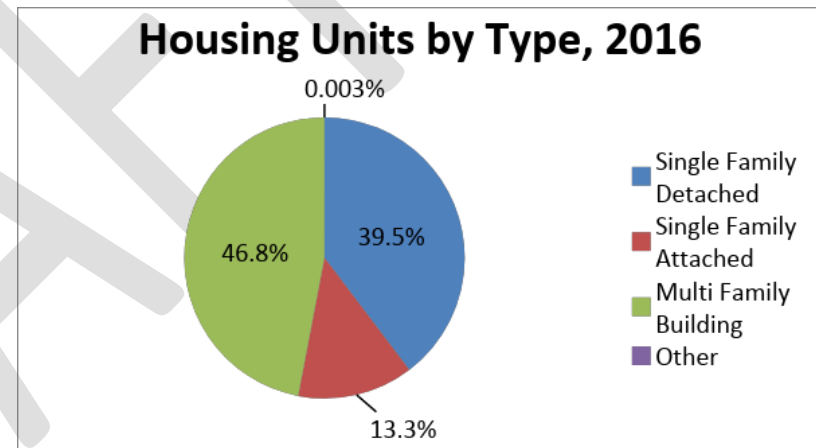
Residents of the City's older residential areas wish to maintain their historic character. As land values rise and housing ages, however, some owners choose to tear down existing homes and replace them with larger structures or add a second structure. Often this new construction changes the character of a neighborhood and can result in a loss of tree canopy.

Particularly in recent decades townhouses and multifamily buildings have supplemented the single-family detached housing. Developments like Taylor Gardens have added to the City's housing diversity.

The City's Housing Stock

According to the 2016 American Community Survey, the City of Falls Church contains 5,709 homes. This figure is an increase of 6.87 percent from the City's 5,342 homes in 2010.

Of these homes, 46.8 percent are in multifamily buildings and 39.5 percent are single-family detached homes. Single-family attached homes (town houses and duplexes) account for the remaining 13.3 percent of housing homes.



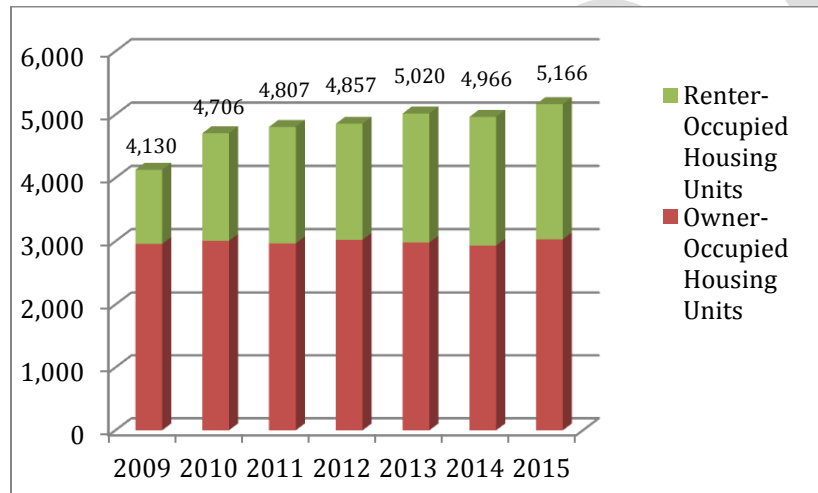
Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2016.

Ownership vs. Rentals

The City's stock of rental housing has been increasing in recent years. Figure XX below demonstrates that the number of owner-occupied homes in the City has stagnated, while the number of renter-occupied homes has increased.



Pearson Square Apartments.



Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2016.

HOUSING VALUES AND RENTAL RATES

Housing values in the City and the Washington, D.C., metro area have been steadily increasing for many years. In 2000, the median house price in the City was \$289,500. In 2010, the median house price was \$641,900. By 2016 the median house price increased to \$724,000.

Jurisdiction	Median House Price 2010 (\$)	Median House Price 2016 (\$)	Percent Change 2010-2016
Falls Church City	641,900	724,000	11.3%
Alexandria City	486,800	520,700	6.9%
Arlington County	571,700	623,300	9.0%
Fairfax City	488,900	487,700	-0.2%
Fairfax County	507,800	516,800	1.7%
United States	188,400	184,700	-1.9%

Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2016.

Age of Housing

More than 40 percent of housing structures were built 60 or more years ago, and almost 71 percent of housing structures were built nearly 40 years ago.

Year Structure Built	Number of Homes	Percentage of Homes	Cumulative Percentage
Before 1959	2,360	41.3%	41.3%
1960-1979	1,686	29.5%	70.8%
1980-1999	731	12.8%	83.6%

2000-Present	932	16.3%	100.0%
Total	5,709	100.0%	-

Source: American Community Survey, 2012-2016.

The housing stock in Falls Church is older than in most jurisdictions in the region. For example, 29.1 percent of Falls Church housing has been built since 1980 compared to 52.7 percent in Fairfax County and 39.9 percent in Arlington County. Falls Church's relatively old age of housing reflects the historic character of the City. Age of housing is one factor in the trend in tear-downs, as some homeowners seek to increase their homes' size and energy efficiency.

Life-Cycle Housing

For housing in Falls Church to be inclusive, it must accommodate all income levels and all stages of household formation. As discussed above, the City has apartments and condominiums for singles and small households, but few are affordable to those with limited incomes. The City has a supply of single-family homes, but most are very expensive. What is missing in Falls Church is a supply of single-family attached houses (town houses or duplexes) and patio homes to accommodate smaller households with moderate incomes.

The chart below records the average home sales price for different housing types in Falls Church. Using the Fannie Mae Home Counselor Affordability Analyzer, the minimum income required to buy the average property type is calculated. The minimum incomes required are quite high considering Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Area Median Income (AMI) limits. This shows that owning a house in the City is very expensive and therefore an option only for higher income earners.

Home Type	2014 Average Home Sales Price	Income Needed to Purchase Unit Type (\$)
Single-Family Detached Homes	\$716,133	\$152,417
Townhouses	\$718,094	\$152,835
Condominiums	\$402,182	\$85,598

MEDIAN MIGHT BE BETTER THAN AVERAGE, SINCE AVERAGES SKEW HIGHER. WHERE DID THESE NUMBERS COME FROM?

The following chart details how much one would need to earn to rent an average apartment in the City of Falls Church for each home type. Three bedroom apartment data is not applicable due to the scarcity of the home type in the City.

Home Type	Average Rent in City (\$)	Minimum Income Required to Buy (\$)
Efficiency/Studio	\$1490	\$59,600
One Bedroom	\$1612	\$64,480
Two Bedroom	\$2031	\$81,240

Source: Housing and Human Services 2018 Rent Survey.

Affordable Housing



West Broad Residences



Lincoln at Tinner Hill Apartments.

The City has seen a decline in the number of market rate affordable ownership homes for households with incomes less than 60 percent

of AMI.⁵ The City has only 27 market rate affordable homes at 60 percent of AMI and only 111 market-rate affordable homes at 80 percent of AMI. The City had 25 ownership Affordable Dwelling Units (ADUs) in 2012. That number has since decreased to 21 homes due to the expiring control periods. The control period for four more homes will expire in 2019, which will bring the total to 17 homes.



Northgate Apartments.

Some developments contain committed affordable rental homes through the City's Affordable Dwelling Unit (ADU) program, committed Teacher Workforce Units (TWUs), or a community

⁵Market rate affordable means that residents can afford them without spending more than 30 percent of their gross monthly income at 60 percent of AMI (a yearly income of \$70,320 for a family of four).

partner. A description of each program can be found in Appendix 1. The breakdown of these homes can be seen in Figure XX below.

Building	Studios	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	Total	Type/Partner
Fields	-	42	47	7	96	Wesley/Ketter
Pearson Square	-	7	8	-	15	ADU
Read Building	-	9	-	-	9	TWU
Lincoln at Tinner Hill	-	10	4	-	14	ADU
West Broad Residences	2	10	6	-	18	ADU
Northgate	-	-	7	-	7	ADU
Winter Hill	-	80	-	-	80	Falls Church Housing Corporation
Total	2	158	72	7	239	

The City does not have public housing. The City participates in the HUD Housing Choice Voucher Program administered by the Fairfax County Redevelopment and Housing Authority. The program offers rental-housing subsidies to households with low and moderate incomes. Within Falls Church, several apartment complexes participate in the program although almost all will not accept new Vouchers.



Read Building

Housing for Seniors

In 2016, 12.4 percent of City residents were 65 or older. Seniors may live in a range of housing, from single-family detached to condos or apartments to assisted living.

The City has a tax abatement and deferment program as well as a Rent Relief program for seniors who qualify by income and/or are veterans or disabled. In 2018 75 seniors received tax relief from the program, with \$244,995 provided in real estate and personal property tax relief. Six seniors received rent relief with \$10,200 provided in relief.

Through agreements with the City of Falls Church, Sunrise Senior Living offers set-aside beds and The Kensington offers subsidized assisted living to low and moderate-income City residents or

members of their immediate families.



Sunrise Assisted Living.

The City receives funding from a HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and the Home Investments Partnerships Grant (HOME). At the Winter Hill apartments, owned by FCHC Virginia Community Development Corporation, for seniors and persons with disabilities, the City uses these funds to provide grants that assist in rehabilitation of the aging facility. Almost all 80 residents of the property have housing vouchers, which assist in their housing cost. In the last 10 years the City has provided over \$100,000 of funding to the rehabilitation effort.



Winter Hill Apartments.

The Railroad Cottages of Falls Church are currently under construction to provide persons 55 or older another housing option. They are small-scale homes with small yards and master bedrooms on the first floor. They seek to provide a neighborly community with shared amenities while also leading the way in energy efficiency, using geothermal and solar energy sources.



Railroad Cottages of Falls Church rendering.

Housing for People with Disabilities or Special Needs

The Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB) Housing Partnerships office collaborates with public and private partners to design, preserve, construct and manage a variety housing opportunities and supportive services for adults with developmental disabilities, serious mental illness, and/or substance use disorders.

Residential support services are based on individual needs and preferences in a variety of settings, from drop-in hours to intermediate care facilities.

In an effort to increase housing for City residents with disabilities, the City partnered with the non-profit CRI, to construct, develop and operate a group home for five adult individuals with disabilities. The group home, Miller House, is located at 366 North Washington Street, which had been City owned land since 1973 and has since been transferred to CRI. City residents receive priority for placement in the home. The Fairfax/Falls Church Community Services Board makes the referral for residents of the home.



Local elected officials, staff and representatives from Community Residences celebrate the groundbreaking of the new Miller House.

Homelessness

The City of Falls Church contracts with the Fairfax County Department of Human Development (DHD) for homeless services.

Under this arrangement all emergency shelter and transitional housing services available to Fairfax County residents, with the exception of three transitional housing homes administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development, are available to City residents. One shelter, Friends of Falls Church Homeless Shelter, operates within the City and has 12 beds – ten for men and two for women. This shelter is open from November 15 through March 31.



Friends of Falls Church Homeless Shelter

The City also leases a four-home apartment building to Homestretch, a local non-profit, which provides transitional housing and services to formerly homeless families, often whom are victims of domestic violence.

Evaluation of Housing Needs

The following evaluation of needs is based on projections included in demographics chapter of this comprehensive plan (updated 2019). The evaluation of needs takes into consideration federal and state requirements related to housing equity.

Federal Housing Requirements

The Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibits the discrimination in the sale, rental, or financing of housing based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, family status, or national origin. Through its membership in the Northern Virginia Community Housing Resources Board (CHRB), the City educates the public and housing industry on fair housing issues.

The Fair Housing Act prohibits state and local land use and zoning laws, policies, and practices that discriminate based on any characteristic protected under the Act. Prohibited practices include making unavailable or denying housing types because of a protected characteristic. Housing includes not only buildings intended for occupancy as residences, but also vacant land that may be developed into residences.⁶

The City has a Fair Housing Ordinance that offers protection to the same classes of persons protected by state and federal laws. The City participates in a regional fair housing testing program through a contract negotiated by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission (NVRC). Fair housing testing is completed biannually. The Housing

⁶ "State and Local Land Use Laws and Practices and the Application of the Fair Housing Act," U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and U.S. Department of Justice, November 16, 2016.

Commission is charged by ordinance to review all fair housing complaints.

State Housing Requirements

Section 15.2-2223 of the Code of Virginia requires that localities' comprehensive plans designate areas for different kinds of residential housing, included age-restricted housing.

Comprehensive plans are also required to designate areas for the construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance of affordable housing "sufficient to meet the current and future needs of residents of all levels of income in the locality."⁷

Future Demand, Amount of Housing

Between 2020 and 2045, the City's supply of and demand for housing are projected to grow as shown in the table below⁸. This represents an increase of approximately 661 to 717 units every five years. This is fairly consistent with the recent pace of residential development in the City. These new units will likely be built in the City's Revitalization Districts, particularly the West End and West Broad.

⁷ Code of Virginia, Section 15.2-2223

⁸ Demographics Chapter, (2019 update)

Table X. Projection of Future Housing Units

Year	Approx. Housing Unit Increment	Approx. Total Units in City
2015		5,384
2020	524	5,908
2025	892 - 953	6,800 - 6,861
2030	880 - 920	7,680 - 7,781
2035	593 - 612	8,273 - 8,393
2040	494 - 528	8,767 - 8,921
2045	444 - 570	9,211 - 9,491

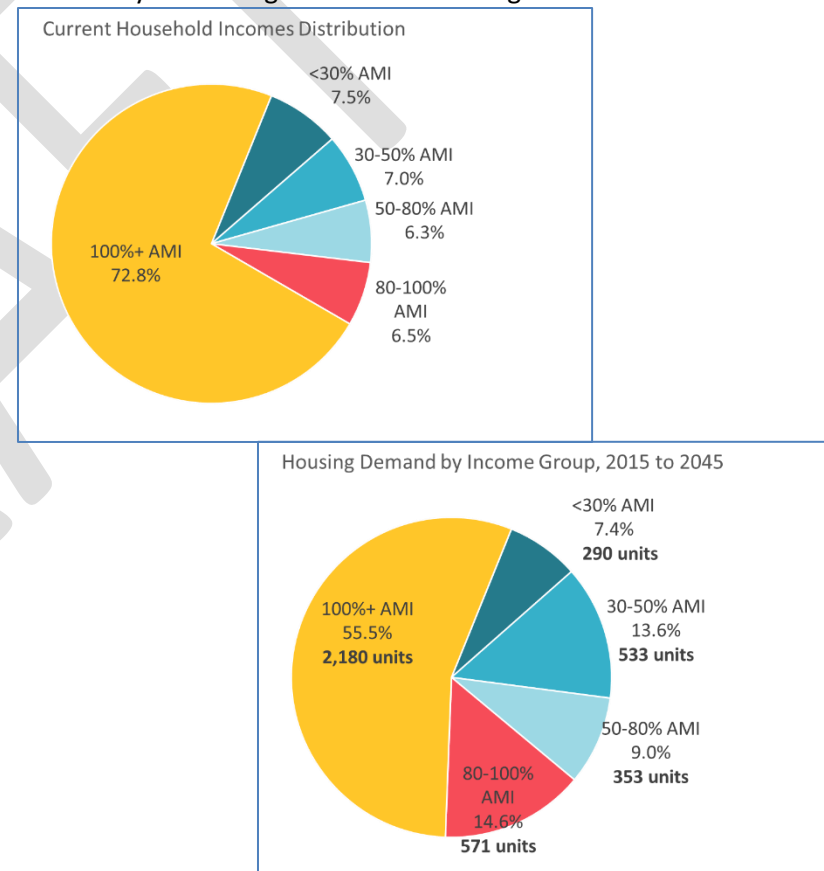
Future Demand, Household Size

Over the last five years, Falls Church has experienced several changes in household composition, including more people living alone (up 20 percent), more millennials (up about 10 percent), more persons 55 and older (up 23.5 percent), and fewer households with children (down 5 percent). If these trends continue, there will be increased demand for smaller units and increase demand for greater diversity of housing types.

Household composition is influenced by the available housing stock. For example, the rise in households of people living alone occurred at the same time as the rise in one-bedroom apartment construction in mixed-use projects. To house a complete community, the City will need to continue to provide a range of housing, from small apartments and condos to small single-family homes, patio homes, and townhouses.

Future Demand, Housing Cost

According to analyses prepared by Lisa Sturtevant & Associates⁹, housing prices of existing homes are significantly higher than what can be afforded by typical incomes in the region (see pie chart below). Future demand for housing can be expected to sync with typical incomes for the region. To meet this demand, the City will need to emphasize strategies that maintain and increase the availability of housing affordable to a range of income levels.



⁹ Need a footnote to LSA presentation

Implementation

Strategies

The following overarching strategies follow from the Vision and Goals presented earlier and form the basis for the policies and actions that follow.

1. Strive to have residential homes available for newly formed households, whether single or married; for growing households that are adding children or extended family; for empty nesters; and for people who need assistance with daily life, at all income levels.
2. Tighten the regulations on tear-downs and limit the size of new housing in historic and stable neighborhoods.
3. Increase the City's supply of affordable living opportunities. Provide incentives for developers to provide more affordable housing.
4. Ensure that a range of housing is available for everyone, especially seniors and persons with disabilities.
5. Continue to ensure that the provision of housing does not discriminate against anyone on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, handicap, family status, or national origin.

Policies and Actions

Policy Action	Staffing or Funding Needs
Goal 1: Encourage a range of residence types in order to meet the needs of our diverse community by providing housing for all family sizes, ages, and incomes	
Increase the percentage of ADUs requested in new developments (above 6 percent).	
Create incentives for developers to provide more affordable housing , e.g., through increased density.	
Establish AMI thresholds in two tiers for rental ADUs , (one, 30-50 percent, another 51-80 percent), which will allow the City to serve a greater range of incomes.	
Establish a higher AMI threshold for ownership ADUs ranging from 80 percent to 120 percent (workforce) to create more ownership ADU opportunities.	
Increase rental ADUs provisions from 20 years to the life of the project.	
Restart the First Time Homebuyer Program to provide assistance in the form of revolving down payment loans.	
Amend the Zoning Ordinance to allow for accessory dwelling units and quads.	
Establish housing targets in each category of housing including: single-room occupancy, efficiencies, apartments with multiple bedrooms,	

condos, quads and single family homes.	
Increase the Affordable Housing Fund by \$2,750,000 through developer contributions at new housing developments. Contributions may be made in lieu of ADUs.	
Provide \$40,000 in City funding for down payment and/or closing cost assistance to first-time homebuyers with incomes up to 120 percent of AMI with a second mortgage that covers up to \$20,000 of down payment and closing costs.	
Increase City funding to allow for one City-Committed Affordable Unit at each property with an ADU Program.	
Provide support for the Fields Apartments to retain its affordability.	
Provide energy efficiency assistance to tenants at lower incomes to lower utility bills , based on the Arlington Energy Master's program.	
Goal 2: Preserve historic neighborhoods and promote neighborhood stability	
Re-evaluate what constitutes a historic property in Falls Church. Conduct an inventory of historic resources in the City other than buildings—for example, aspects of the landscape, fencing, objects, and other structures.	
Review the City's Zoning Ordinance for ways to support and strengthen historic preservation.	
Provide technical assistance to owners of historic	

properties about the Virginia Historic Preservation Tax Credit and other preservation incentives.	
Inform residents about the importance of the City's historic neighborhoods through educational programs, enhancement of the City's website, walking tours, and other measures.	
Establish a neighborhood gateway program that includes signage that highlights subdivision names as well as new landscaping.	
Formally recognize civic associations to increase social connectivity.	
Allow administrative changes to building setback requirements when such changes preserve mature trees.	
Update the Zoning Ordinance to enable in-place additions as opposed to tear-downs in areas that frequently require variances for modest additions, such as Greenway Downs.	
Goal 3: Protect and support affordable living for persons with disabilities, the elderly, and other special needs populations	
Require one universally accessible affordable home to be built at all new housing developments.	
Goal 4: Ensure equitable housing opportunities for all based on race, color, religion, sex, handicap, family status, or national origin	
Along with other localities, advocate for legislation to add source of income to Fair Housing regulations.	

Continue to offer Fair Housing training to all City landlords, property owners, and rental properties. EXPAND TRAINING?	
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